

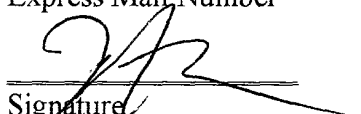
Abstract of the Disclosure

The present invention provides a system and network architecture for a plurality of internet-enabled appliances to communicate with each other and with a plurality of users simultaneously in real time. In a preferred embodiment, a system in accordance with the present invention allows any appliance with built-in internet connectivity, or retrofitted with an interface device containing said connectivity, to communicate with a central server over the internet without human intervention. Software means is provided at said central server to enable such communication. Firmware and hardware means are provided for each appliance to connect to and disconnect from said server on demand either through a dial-up connection or a dedicated communication line. The present invention allows for each device to send data to said central server, receive data from said server, or send data to and receive data from another device via said central server under user-programmable control means residing in said server.

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